

## Written Testimony for House Bill 535

Thank you for this opportunity to provide support for House Bill 535, or the Opioid Data and Communication Expansion Act that was introduced by State Representative Theresa Gavarone.

My name is Dr. Nancy Orel and I am the Executive Director of Research of the Optimal Aging Institute at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio. My home address is 925 Bexley Drive, Perrysburg Ohio.

In my role as the Executive Director of Research of the Optimal Aging Institute, I am currently investigating the impact of the opioid crisis on middle-aged and older adults in collaboration with Denise Niese (Executive Director of the Wood County Committee on Aging). Although the general population has largely understood the opioid crisis as affecting younger adults, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2017) has recently reported that **adults between the ages of 45-54 had the highest death rate from drug overdose (4.2 deaths per 100,000 in 1999 to 21.8 per 100,000 in 2015) and overdose death rates increased the greatest in adults aged 55-64 (30 deaths per 100,000).**

Additionally, reports from the American Association of Retired Persons (2018) indicate that approximately 2.7 million Americans over age 50 are currently taking opioids for reasons contrary to or in amounts beyond what was originally prescribed. The nonmedical use of prescription pain relievers among those aged 50 and older has been associated with negative health outcomes including falls, hip fractures, traffic accidents, confusion, cardiac events, and death. It has been reported that 42% of all overdose deaths in the United States are people aged 45 and older. However, accurate data is needed on the number of middle-aged and older adults in Wood County who were treated at hospitals for a drug overdose, as well as the number of middle-aged and older adults in Wood County who were

administered Naloxone by emergency medical service personnel. At the present time, we must rely on national data that provides estimates.

The CDC reported that from July 2016 through September 2017, emergency room visits for suspected opioid overdoses spiked 30% nationwide with the most severe problems experienced in the Midwest - Opioid overdoses in Ohio spiked 28% last year. Although there were substantial overdose increases among most demographic groups, those aged 55 and older were reported to have the highest percentage increase at 32%.

All of these statistics are alarming and indicate that the opioid crisis is getting worse, with middle-aged and older adults showing dramatic increases in overdose deaths. However, as alarming as these statistics are, it is recognized by substance abuse and drug addiction experts that more accurate and timely information is needed. Representative Theresa Gavarone has worked tirelessly with professionals from the Wood County Opiate Task Force to address the need for accurate and timely information and has introduced HB 535. As a member of the Wood County Opiate Task Force, and a researcher, I am fully aware of the importance of having comprehensive data that illustrates the magnitude of the opioid crisis in order to provide timely and responsive services and programs. I am especially interested in data that reports opioid use, misuse, abuse, and overdose deaths based on age.

HB 535, or the Opioid Data and Communication Expansion Act will establish reporting requirements governing the following opioid related topics: the treatment of drug overdoses, the administration of naloxone, and the dispensing or furnishing of naltrexone. Specifically, hospitals will be required to report monthly to the Ohio Department of Health the number of fatal and non-fatal drug overdose cases brought to the hospital and the Ohio Department of Public Safety will be

required to submit non-identifying information related to the administration of naloxone to the Department of Health. Although these requirements will provide needed data, the data would be more robust if age of the individual was included in the reports.

In my position as a member of the Wood County Opiate Task Force, I am especially aware of Wood County's efforts to expand the availability of Naloxone. Naloxone can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose but unfortunately there are many middle-aged and older adults who are not aware of Naloxone and/or its potential to reverse the effects of an opioid overdose. The Optimal Aging Institute (OAI) and the Wood County Committee on Aging (WCCOA) will be increasing the access to Naloxone throughout the older adult community – at senior centers, assisted living facilities, long-term care centers, and Continuing Care Retirement Centers (CCRCs). Representatives from project DAWN (Deaths Avoided With Naloxone) will provide Naloxone kits, with appropriate training along with opioid prevention education products developed by OAI and WCCOA. To assess the effectiveness of this initiative, we would need accurate data if/when Naloxone is administered to a middle-aged or older adult. However, the availability of Naloxone is especially important for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren because their adult children are abusing opioids. The Wood County Committee on Aging has had numerous inquiries about Naloxone kits by grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. These grandparents are in constant fear that their adult children will overdose.

House Bill 535, or the Opioid Data and Communication and Expansion Act is very important legislation and I applaud Representative Theresa Gavarone for introducing this legislation and her tremendous efforts in fighting the opioid epidemic. I support HB 535 and I will continue to work diligently with the Wood

County Opiate Task Force and the Wood County Committee on Aging to address the impact of the opioid crisis on **all** residents of Wood County, Ohio. Thank you.